

Working Together Downrange

By John J. Garcia, Major, USA

Editorial Abstract: MAJ Garcia provides a recent account of applied influence operations at the tactical and operational levels. He describes working-level successes in Iraq, emphasizing the importance of cooperation and synchronization between elements across the Brigade Combat Team.

Many at the Corps level and higher have the perception that Information Operations (IO) and Public Affairs (PA) working together is strictly *verboten*. The public affairs charter is to inform the American public, while Information Operations is focused on influencing foreign audiences. Yet due to the surge of the Information Age and ever-changing counterinsurgency (COIN) environment, IO and PA lines need to merge and speak with one voice.

Fortunately, information operations doctrine outlined in Field Manual 3-13 is changing to reflect the rapid changes in the COIN information environment. The current focus is on the integration of five capabilities, centered on: Military Deception; Operations Security; Psychological Operations, Computer Network Operations; and Electronic Warfare—and supporting elements: Physical Destruction; Information Assurance; Physical Security; Counterintelligence; Counter-Deception; and Counter-Propaganda. Information operations officers in the current COIN campaigns deal strictly with PSYOP, EW, MILDEC, and OPSEC, in addition to related principles such as Public Affairs and Civil Military Operations.



Figure 1. Logical Lines of Operation (1st BCT)

When the 1st Brigade Combat Team (BCT), 1st Cavalry Division, prepared to deploy in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom 06-08, the BCT Commander made the decision to align the staff along the logical lines of operations (LOOs) in accordance with FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*. Under the Communications LOO, the BCT S7 was the lead agent. The agencies aligned under the COMMS LOO were: IO, PAO, Electronic Warfare, Psychological Operations and Combat Camera. Under this new staff configuration, the IO officer would be charged with synchronizing these agencies in order to set the conditions for the other lines of operations to be successful—and ensure the BCT was able to influence the populace to support coalition and Government of Iraq (GOI) actions (Figure 1).

Aligning the agencies as listed above has been controversial at echelons above the BCT level. Some people will argue that IO and PAO need to remain separate due to perception that IO (PSYOP and Military Deception), in some cases, does not tell the entire truth. Plus, the target audiences are

different. During OIF 06-08 the BCT had a visit from a PA Officer in a sister service, who worked for a higher organization. When I introduced myself as the BCT S7, he immediately stated that he should not be seen talking to me, for it would ruin his credibility with mainstream media. In some cases this concern is valid, but with current manning at the BCT level and the information environment, the lines of IO and PAO merge. These agencies need to be synchronized to prevent information fratricide, and “desynchronize” the BCT Commander’s Campaign Plan objectives which focuses on *all lines of operations and communications*—this being the overarching LOO.

A good example of how effective the Communications LOO can be in the COIN environment was an April 2007 incident in Tarmiyah, Iraq, (20 miles north of Baghdad). At the time, Tarmiyah was considered an Al Qaeda safe haven. As many people know, Al Qaeda is against women getting an education. In order to prevent young girls from attending classes, Al Qaeda rigged a girl’s school with explosives—after Coalition forces had paid US \$650,000 to refurbish this same facility. Al Qaeda’s plans were to detonate improvised explosive devices (IED) when school was in session, potentially killing over 200 young girls. When Coalition Forces discovered the plot, the BCT immediately issued a press release while simultaneously issuing tailored talking points to the soldiers to engage key leaders, and broadcast PSYOP speaker truck messages stating the facts of this situation. As a result, the messages resonated, and many Iraqi people in the town were outraged. Both initial and follow-on press releases were briefed by Multinational Force-Iraq (MNF-I) to the international press



ICD Soldier hands out Newspapers to the people of Saba al Bor Iraq (1 BCT, US Army)



*Iraqi Army Soldiers mentored by CF hand out schools supplies to children on the first day of school.
(1 BCT, US Army)*

corps. The story generated a great deal of international attention, and appeared in nearly all international news agencies to include pan-Arab stations such as *Al Jazeera*. In the United States the story picked up by nearly all the major news networks to include CNN's Wolf Blitzer, and *Prime Time News with ABC*. The message was clear from the beginning: Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) was trying to impose their strict values on the people of the town by denying girls the right to an education, and the extremists would stop at nothing to demonstrate their agenda—which included killing innocent girls.

The example in Figure 2 best demonstrates how IO and PA working together can exploit events to get a

synchronized message to the public while achieving maximum effect. The vignette below demonstrates how the BCT shaped the information environment prior to the event, to achieve its Communications Objective of Reducing the Populace's support to violent activities and political elements that threaten Iraq's future. These themes were developed months before as part of the 1st Cavalry Division's Campaign Plan. The BCT

used the themes and messages listed on the top right hand corner of the vignette on a consistent basis to "drive the wedge" between the populace and AQI. The lines displayed indicate radio and television commercials running on Baghdad television and radio which reinforced the IO Objectives, themes and messages the BCT disseminated on a consistent basis. From the MNF-I headquarters to the soldiers on the ground, all agencies in this vignette were "on message." The press release issued at MNF-I level was based off the facts the unit submitted up to MND-B, while simultaneously the MND-B G7 reinforced the message by providing the facts to local radio stations and the local paper, *Baghdad Now*. The

IO Objectives also formed a guide by which the public affairs would focus their stories. The results of this synchronized event were negative 2nd and 3rd order effects for Al Qaeda in Tarmiyah. Based on atmospherics following the foiled attack, many people were upset, and Al Qaeda lost influence in the town, due to this and similar events. Tarmiyah tribal leaders now have turned to Coalition Forces for assistance in ridding Al Qaeda from their area.

An equally important reason for speaking with one synchronized voice is the information environment is so mature: Iraqis are not naive enough to ignore Western media websites and television outlets. An estimated 90% of Iraqis in Baghdad watch television, and of those 90%, over 95% of those watch some form of news. One can easily support this figure by taking a helicopter ride over Baghdad, and observing the enormous quantities of satellite dishes on almost every house or apartment building. Figure 3 further demonstrates the importance of a single synchronized voice, as well as extreme importance of the communication LOO: there are various inputs information cycle inputs, and all originate at the Brigade level.

To verify if our messages were getting out into the information domain, the BCT had several methods for measuring dissemination. Public Affairs can measure which markets selected their press releases, and how many people viewed their products by using the Digital Video Imagery and Distribution System (DVIDS). This system provides file stories and video for any media outlet to use, anywhere in the media environment. Another easy means for measuring if your messages are getting out into the public is receiving Google Alerts. The Google browser filter can be setup to select key words or phrases, and alert you when key words are mentioned in the media. This is a great system to monitor progress of your press releases. The model demonstrates how all agencies can track inputs through to the outputs, and the distribution methods used, allowing BCTs to assess where they need to go in the future to have a

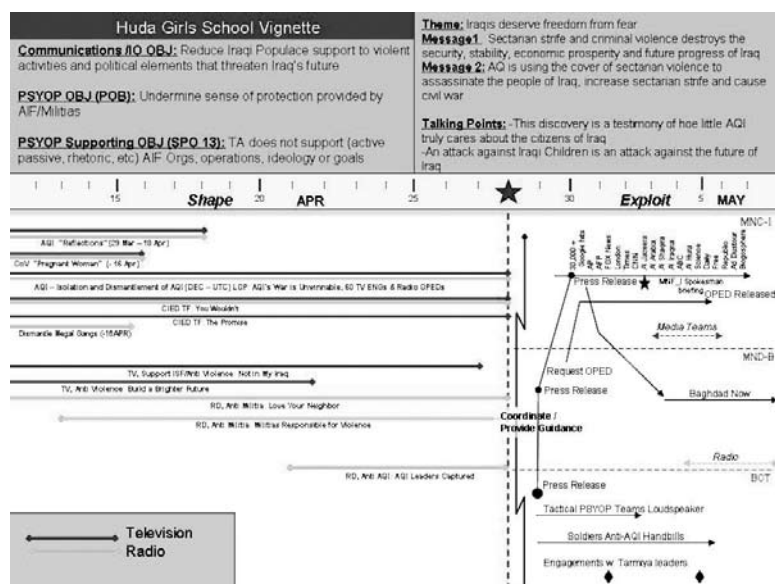


Figure 2. Huda Girls School Vignette

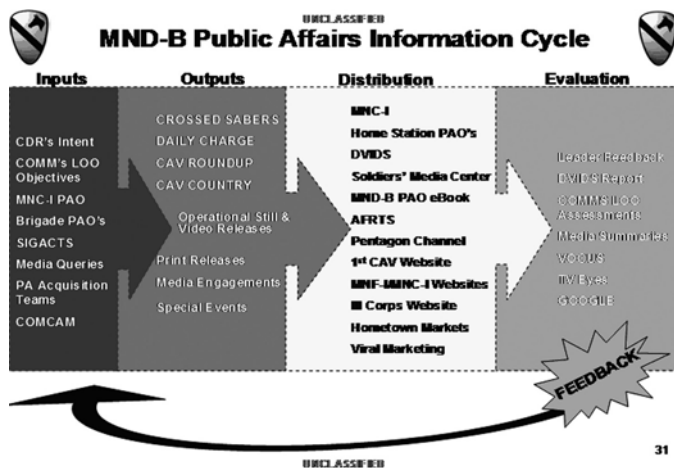


Figure 3. Public Affairs information Cycle.
(1st Cavalry Division, US Army)



Mr. Calabi visits the city of Saba al Bor to deliver key messages on Reconciliation efforts to the people of the area (1 BCT, US Army)

desired effect. In practice, the BCT used a variety of methods to reach multiple target audiences. We felt it was critical to tell our story to all the Iraqi people, while simultaneously informing them of AQI atrocities, and noting progress being made by the local government and Iraqi Security Forces.

Before the BCT started its train up for Operation Iraqi Freedom 06-08 at the Joint Readiness Training Center in Louisiana, the S7 cell developed a mnemonic to assist soldiers and leaders in memorizing the commander's key tasks for the entire operation: the mnemonic "SSS-T-P," meaning "*SAFE, SECURE, STABLE, TOGETHER, PROFESSIONAL*" with our Iraqi counterparts and all brigade soldiers conducting themselves in a proper manner at all times. The mnemonic was integrated into all brigade talking points, and it was especially designed to be used in any situation. On numerous occasions during media or bilateral engagements, commanders would use "SSS-T-P" in some fashion to highlight the events in their operation environment. Soldiers also enforced this expression with their actions, and it resonated with the Iraqi populace. On one occasion during an Iraqi Sheik Reconciliation conference, with over 300 influential sheiks in attendance, the keynote speaker used "SSS-T-P" for his message *to the other sheiks*. Of course, the Sheik Conference was broadcast on all the Baghdad news

agencies. The widespread use of this key expression again demonstrates why it is critical to synchronize message all along all the LOOs—with *all* the target audiences.

As the Army and Joint Forces continue to evolve and shape the Information Operations career field, IO and PAO will work together more closely than ever. The new definition of an IO officer's responsibility places synchronization of all the information effects clearly on his or her shoulders.

It is critical that information operations and Public Affairs be nested at the brigade level, to ensure synchronization of overall IO objectives and themes and messages—because anything the soldier on the ground says or does effects the information environment. In the past, many people wanted to keep the information disciplines separate. Here in the mature information environment, with all lines of operation operating at amazing speeds, we can—and must—be synchronized. 🌀